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State Within a State?

Is the Central Intelligence Agency a state within a state?

President Kennedy's recall of the head of C.I.A. operations in South Vietnam, coming after persistent reports of discord between him and Ambassador Lodge, appears to provide substantive corroboration to the long-voiced charges that our intelligence organization too often tends to "make" policy.

The C.I.A. is a large and, on the whole, well-organized intelligence apparatus, which knows and employs all the tricks of the trade. But it not only gathers intelligence; it "operates" saboteurs, guerrillas and other paramilitary forces. And its operations—particularly if they are not carefully programmed, controlled and directed—tend willy-nilly to influence policy, if not to make it.

The agency has many extremely able men. But it operates behind the cloak of anonymity and secrecy—and secrecy adds to power. When the same organization collects intelligence and evaluates it, and, at the same time, conducts clandestine operations—and when that organization is as powerful and as well financed as the C.I.A.—there is an inevitable tendency for some of its personnel to assume the functions of king-makers.

Communist imperialism and the exigencies of the nuclear age have brought us cons away—whether we like it or not—from the era of 1920, when Secretary of State Stimson closed the nation's only code-breaking organization with the remark that "gentlemen do not read each other's mail." Today we must read the other fellow's mail if we want to survive.

But the C.I.A., like the F.B.I., has gone too long without adequate Congressional accountability. A Joint Congressional Committee on Intelligence, so long urged but so often frustrated by Congressional pride of place and petty jealousies, should be established to monitor our intelligence services, to safeguard their secrecy and to reduce the dangers secret espionage and covert operations present to a free society.

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